

## COUNTRY PROFILE: TAJIKISTAN

October 2004

### COUNTRY

**Formal Name:** Republic of Tajikistan (Jumhurii Tojikiston).

**Short Form:** Tajikistan.

**Term for Citizen(s):** Tajikistani(s).

**Capital:** Dushanbe.

**Other Major Cities:** Istravshan, Khujand, Kulob, and Qurgonteppa.

**Independence:** The official date of independence is September 9, 1991, the date on which Tajikistan withdrew from the Soviet Union.

**Public Holidays:** New Year's Day (January 1), International Women's Day (March 8), Navruz (Persian New Year, March 20, 21, or 22), International Labor Day (May 1), Victory Day (May 9), Independence Day (September 9), Constitution Day (November 6), and National Reconciliation Day (November 9).

**Flag:**

The flag features three horizontal stripes: a wide middle white stripe with narrower red (top) and green stripes. Centered in the white stripe is a golden crown topped by seven gold, five-pointed stars. The red is taken from the flag of the Soviet Union; the green represents agriculture and the white, cotton. The crown and stars represent the country's sovereignty and the friendship of nationalities.



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### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Iranian peoples such as the Soghdians and the Bactrians are the ethnic forbears of the modern Tajiks. They have inhabited parts of Central Asia for at least 2,500 years, assimilating with Turkic and Mongol groups. Between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., present-day Tajikistan was part of the Persian Achaemenid Empire, which was conquered by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. After that conquest, Tajikistan was part of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, a successor state to Alexander's empire. Between the first and fourth centuries A.D., the area was part of the Kushan Empire, which spread Buddhism among the Soghdians and Bactrians of the region. The Chinese also were active in the region during this period. In the years before the eighth century, the Sassanids exerted a strong Persian cultural and linguistic influence on the area. In the eighth century, Islamic Arabs conquered modern-day Tajikistan and brought with them Islam, which within one century was the predominant religion of the region. Between the

Arab conquest and the year 999, the strongest influence was that of the Persian Samanid Dynasty. The conquest of that dynasty by the Qarakhanid Turks intensified the introduction of Turkic peoples and culture into the region. Between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries, modern-day Tajikistan was ruled successively by Turks, the Mongols, and the Uzbeks.

The Uzbek state that conquered the region in the sixteenth century divided into several khanates that ruled until the Russian Empire began taking over Central Asia in the mid-nineteenth century. Part of modern-day Tajikistan was included in the Russian Governorate General of Turkestan. During this period, Tajikistan felt the influence of economic changes such as the introduction of cotton and of political forces such as the Jadadist reform movement and the bloody revolt against Russian conscription that began in 1916. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Soviet forces gradually overcame the widely dispersed resistance of indigenous Central Asian insurgents, some of whom were based in Tajikistan. In 1924 Tajikistan became an autonomous republic within the new Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, and in 1929 the country became a full-fledged Soviet republic. In the years between the world wars, the economy of Tajikistan was absorbed into the Soviet economic system, which designated Tajikistan as a cotton-growing republic. Tajiks exerted very little influence in Soviet political affairs during this time, and many Tajik party members were purged from the republic's communist party.

In the post-World War II Soviet era, irrigation was expanded in Tajikistan's agricultural system, industries developed, and the level of education rose. During this period, political life was dominated by a series of nondescript party functionaries. In the late 1980s, the openness of the Soviet regime of Mikhail S. Gorbachev stimulated a nationalist movement in Tajikistan, and Tajik leaders reluctantly declared sovereignty in 1991, when the dissolution of the Soviet Union became obvious. The last of the communist party leaders, Rakhmon Nabiyev, was elected the first president of independent Tajikistan in 1991. A year later, in 1992, a conflict between the government and reform groups led to the collapse of the Nabiyev government and then to a civil war that lasted five years and cost between 50,000 and 100,000 lives. Imomali Rakhmonov, who had taken power after the collapse of the coalition government that followed Nabiyev's fall, was elected president in 1994 without the participation of opposition parties.

In the mid-1990s, rebel forces gained control of large parts of eastern Tajikistan, even though the government had Russian troops at its disposal. After sporadic cease-fires and negotiations, in 1997 the Rakhmonov government signed a peace accord with the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a coalition of Islamic leaders and secular politicians. In the years that followed, insurgent groups of the UTO remained active in some parts of the country, and a series of assassinations resulted. In 1999 the UTO responded to the addition of more UTO representatives in government positions by disbanding its armed forces. During 1999 the UTO fighting force was integrated into the armed forces of Tajikistan. However, at the same time the extremist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was building bases in the mountains of Tajikistan and establishing a large-scale trade in narcotics from Afghanistan. In the early 2000s, narcotics trade would be an increasingly serious problem, even after the defeat of the IMU in Afghanistan in early 2002.

Rakhmonov easily won re-election in the presidential election of 1999, and the parliamentary elections of 2000 gave Rakhmonov's party a strong majority. In both instances, some opposition candidates were barred. In the wake of this success, Rakhmonov restructured the government in

ways that further strengthened his power. In 2003 a referendum approved constitutional amendments that theoretically would allow Rakhmonov to remain in power until 2020.

## GEOGRAPHY

**Location:** Tajikistan is located on the southern edge of the Central Asian group of nations, bordering Afghanistan to the south, China to the east, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and Uzbekistan to the west.



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**Size:** The smallest of the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia, Tajikistan has an area of 143,100 square kilometers, of which 400 square kilometers is water.

**Land Boundaries:** The border with Afghanistan is 1,206 kilometers; with Uzbekistan, 1,161 kilometers; with Kyrgyzstan, 870 kilometers; and with China, 414 kilometers.

**Disputed Territory:** Tajikistan has a territorial dispute with Kyrgyzstan over land in the Isfara Valley in the far northeast, and full demarcation of the border with Uzbekistan has been delayed by Uzbekistan's mining of its borders.

**Length of Coastline:** Tajikistan is landlocked.

**Topography:** About 93 percent of Tajikistan is mountainous, dominated by the Alay Range in the north and the Pamir Mountains to the southeast, which has the highest elevations in the country. More than half of the country is higher than 3,000 meters in elevation. The lowest elevations are located in the northwest, the southwest, and the Fergana Valley, which dominates Tajikistan's far northern section. The mountain chains are interspersed with deep valleys formed by a complex network of rivers. The eastern mountains contain many glaciers and lakes. The Fedchenko Glacier, which covers 700 square kilometers, is the largest non-polar glacier in the world.

**Principal Rivers:** In Tajikistan's dense river network, the largest rivers are the Syr Darya, the Amu Darya (called the Panj in its upper reaches in Tajikistan), the Vakhsh (called the Surkhob in its upper reaches in Tajikistan), and the Kofarnihon. The Amu Darya carries more water than any other river in Central Asia. The Vakhsh is an important source of hydropower.

**Climate:** The climate is mainly continental, with drastic differences according to elevation. The climate is very dry in the subtropical southwestern lowlands, which also have the highest temperatures. The summer temperature range in the lowlands is from 27° to 30° C, and the winter range is from 3° to -1° C. In the eastern Pamirs, the summer temperature range is from 5° to 10° C, and the winter range is from -15° to -20° C. In some areas, however, winter temperatures drop to -45° Celsius. Rainfall in the mountain valleys averages 150 to 250 millimeters per year; at the higher elevations, rainfall averages 60 to 80 millimeters per year. The

highest precipitation rate, 2,236 millimeters per year, is near the Fedchenko Glacier in eastern Tajikistan.

**Natural Resources:** Tajikistan's most notable resources are rich deposits of gold, silver, and antimony and the water power provided by its rivers.

**Land Use:** Some 6.6 percent of Tajikistan is classified as arable land, 5 percent is forested, and 0.9 percent is devoted to permanent crops. The remainder is mountains, valleys, glaciers, and desert.

**Environmental Factors:** The major environmental problems are concentrations of agricultural chemicals and salts in the soil and groundwater, pockets of high air pollution caused by industry and motor vehicles, water pollution from agricultural runoff and disposal of untreated industrial waste and sewage, poor management of water resources, and soil erosion. The resolution of these problems has been delayed by the overall poverty of the country and the civil war of 1992-97. Although the civil war reduced industrial and agricultural activity substantially, it also interrupted environmental monitoring and maintenance activities put in place by the Soviet Union's Committee on Nature Protection, leaving Tajikistan with a severely reduced infrastructure for both economic and environmental activity.

A large Soviet-era uranium mining operation left poorly constructed repositories of radioactive waste in northwestern Tajikistan. Other operations in Tajikistan extracted and processed gold, antimony, tungsten, mercury, and molybdenum, each of which is known to leave toxic waste. The Kofarnihon, Zarafshon, and Vakhsh rivers pass through heavily polluting industrial regions of the country, carrying pollutants into the Amu Darya and thence to the Aral Sea. Tajikistan's withdrawal of water for irrigation from the Syr Darya and tributaries of the Amu Darya also influences the quantity of water downstream. Therefore, Tajikistan's management of water contaminants is a regional concern.

Water pollution is caused by large-scale runoff of pesticides and mineral fertilizers from fields and storage sites and the leakage of salts from faulty irrigation lines. Ground water also has been polluted in industrial areas. Air pollution became a major environmental problem in the late 1980s. It is especially a problem during times of the year when atmospheric conditions hold industrial and vehicle emissions close to the surface in locations such as Dushanbe, Yavan, Regar, and Qurghonteppa in the southwest and Khujand in the far northwest. In summer, dust and sand from the deserts of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan cause air pollution in the valleys of the Syr Darya and Zarafshon rivers and across the entire southwestern lowland region. Water erosion affects an estimated 70 percent of irrigated land, and overgrazing also contributes to soil erosion. Agricultural land suffers from high salinity and chemical content because of the intensive use of fertilizers in the Soviet era. Forest degradation also is a serious problem as trees are cut to expand pastureland on collective farms.

**Time Zone:** Tajikistan's time zone is five hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time.

## SOCIETY

**Population:** In 2004 Tajikistan's population was estimated at 7,011,556 people. The growth rate was 2.14 percent per year. The average density was 43.6 people per square kilometer, but the population was concentrated heavily in the western, southwestern, and northwestern regions. Some 30 percent of the population was classified as urban, the lowest percentage among the former Soviet republics. Most of the 70,000 Tajiks who emigrated to Afghanistan during the civil war (1992–97) had returned by 2003, but between 500,000 and 1 million Tajiks who fled to Russia have not returned. In 2004 the net migration rate was –2.86 per 1,000 population.

**Demography:** In 2004 some 39.2 percent of the population was 14 years of age or younger, and only 4.7 percent was 65 years of age or older. The birthrate was 32.6 births per 1,000 population, and the infant mortality rate was 54 deaths per 1,000 live births. Overall life expectancy was 64.5 years: 61.5 years for males, 67.5 for females. The fertility rate, 4.1 children per woman, was the highest among the former Soviet republics.

**Ethnic Groups:** According to the 2000 census, 80 percent of the population was Tajik, 13.5 percent Uzbek, 1.1 percent Russian, and 0.3 percent Tatar. Between the censuses of 1989 and 2000, the Uzbek population decreased from 23.5 percent to 13.5 percent and the Russian population decreased from 7.6 percent to 1.1 percent. Particularly in the Fergana Valley, intermarriage between Tajiks and Uzbeks has essentially merged the two groups. The Russian population is concentrated in Dushanbe. Since 2000 the rate of Russian emigration has slowed. In the same period, the Tajik population increased from 62.3 percent to 80 percent. Smaller ethnic groups include Germans, Jews, Koreans, Turkmen, and Ukrainians. Tajiks also have a strong regional affiliation: mountains divide the country into northern and southern regions, whose rivalry spurred the civil war of the 1990s.

**Languages:** The official state language is Tajik, which is related to Persian. Russian is widely used in government and business, and Uzbek is the main language of about 25 percent of the population. Variants of Tajik are spoken in the mountains of Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan's eastern region.

**Religion:** Some 85 percent of the population is Sunni Muslim and 5 percent Shia Muslim. The Pamiri population of Gorno-Badakhshan is mainly of the Shia Ismaili sect of Islam. The largest Christian group is Russian Orthodox, concentrated in Dushanbe. Small groups of other Christian denominations and a small Jewish community also exist.

**Education and Literacy:** School attendance is mandatory between the ages of 7 and 17, but many children fail to attend because of economic needs and security concerns in some regions. At all levels, Tajikistan's education system suffers from a depleted infrastructure and an acute shortage of teachers. The state-supported Soviet system remains in place, but the poor condition of the national economy and years of civil war have sharply reduced funding. In 2003 the total government expenditure on education was about US\$37 million, 13.2 percent of the state budget. The official literacy rate is 98 percent, but the poor quality of education since 1991 has reduced skills in the younger generations. Some private schools and colleges have appeared in urban

centers, and some Russian and Uzbek schools exist. Tajik is the main language of instruction through secondary school. About 15 institutions of higher learning were operating in 2003.

**Health:** Indicators such as infant and maternal mortality rates are among the highest of the former Soviet republics. In the post-Soviet era, life expectancy has decreased because of poor nutrition, polluted water supplies, and increased incidence of cholera, malaria, tuberculosis, and typhoid. Because the health care system has deteriorated badly and receives insufficient funding and because sanitation and water supply systems are in declining condition, Tajikistan has a high risk of epidemic disease. Several typhoid epidemics have occurred since 1991. Many Russian doctors left Tajikistan after 1991, leaving the country with the lowest ratio of doctors to population in the former Soviet Union. The necessity of importing all pharmaceuticals has created an acute shortage of some critical items. The shortage of facilities, materials, and personnel is especially serious in rural areas.

Since the late 1990s, the high volume of illegal narcotics trafficked through the country has caused a rapid increase in narcotics addiction, which has become a major health issue. In 2004 the number of addicts was estimated at between 60,000 and 80,000. Although reliable statistics are not available on the occurrence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), it is known that most HIV cases are drug-related and that since the late 1990s HIV occurrence has increased rapidly in areas such as the autonomous republic of Gorno-Badakhshan, where the flow of narcotics is greatest and poverty is endemic.

**Welfare:** In 2004 the World Bank estimated that 83 percent of Tajikistanis live below the national poverty line, and 17 percent are categorized as destitute. Pensioners have been among those most severely affected by Tajikistan's economic crisis and the lingering effects of the civil war. Pensions are paid for old age, disability, loss of the wage earner, and for dependents. Most of the state's welfare expenditure goes to pensions for retired workers who have worked a minimum number of years (25 years for men, 20 years for women). The age criteria are lowered for some disabled workers and mothers with five or more children. Persons who have never worked for wages receive a reduced old-age pension. Dependents and widows receive pensions that are half of the minimal allowance. In the post-Soviet era, the welfare system has not served the public well because of unpredictable state revenue and the erosion of pension value by high inflation. In 2003 a constitutional amendment eliminated the right to free health care for all citizens.

## ECONOMY

**Overview:** Tajikistan's economy, which had been the poorest in the Soviet Union, was severely disrupted by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the civil war of 1992–97. With independence, Tajikistan lost the nearly 50 percent of its state revenue that had come as transfers from Moscow, as well as barter arrangements that brought food from other republics in exchange for cotton and aluminum. The civil war disrupted both agricultural and industrial production. Particularly hard-hit was the cotton industry, a key economic element in the Soviet era. The output of aluminum, Tajikistan's most important industrial product, has not approached the pre-independence level in the early 2000s. Economic reform has been uneven, and privatization has

occurred mainly in the services sector. In 2004 the economy remained fundamentally agricultural and highly dependent on the export of aluminum and cotton. Black market and informal transactions account for a significant part of the economy.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** In 2003 Tajikistan's GDP grew by 9.9 percent, to US\$1.32 billion. This marked the third consecutive year of annual growth exceeding 8 percent. In 2003 services contributed 40 percent, agriculture 31 percent, and industry 19 percent to GDP. Per capita GDP was US\$188.

**Government Budget:** In 2003 Tajikistan's revenue totaled US\$253.5 million, and its expenditures totaled US\$238.5 million, yielding a surplus of US\$15 million. Thus, 2003 was the third consecutive year of budget surplus, after four consecutive years of deficits between 1997 and 2000. The government reported a surplus of US\$720,000 in the first half of 2004.

**Inflation:** Throughout the post-Soviet era, inflation has been a serious obstacle to economic growth and improvement of the standard of living. In 2003 the inflation rate was estimated at 16.3 percent. In 1999-2002 the rates were 22 percent, 33 percent, 33 percent, and 12.2 percent.

**Agriculture:** Although the government has announced an expedited land reform program, many Soviet-era state farms still existed in 2004, and the state retains control of production and harvesting on privatized farms. Privatization of cotton farms has been especially slow. In the early 2000s, the major crops were cotton (which occupied one-third of arable land), cereals (mainly wheat), potatoes, vegetables (mainly onions and tomatoes), fruits, and rice. Much of the agricultural land depends on irrigation. In 2003 cotton and wheat harvests were very high after drought caused three years of substandard output.

**Forestry:** About 5 percent of Tajikistan is wooded, mainly at elevations between 1,000 and 3,000 meters. No forest region is classified as commercially usable; most are under state protection. Wood production is negligible, but local inhabitants harvest non-wood forest products.

**Fishing:** Streams and lakes produce a limited amount of fish, and some fish is produced by aquaculture. In 2001 some 137 tons of fish were caught and 73 tons raised on fish farms.

**Mining and Minerals:** Tajikistan has rich deposits of gold, silver, and antimony. However, its fossil fuel deposits are meager.

**Industry and Manufacturing:** The output of most industries declined sharply during the mid-1990s. Tajikistan's only major heavy industries are aluminum processing and chemical production. The former, which provided 40 percent of industrial production in 2003, is centered at the Tursunzoda processing plant, the latter in Dushanbe, Qurgonteppa, and Yavan. Some small light industrial plants produce textiles and processed foods. Those industries mainly process domestic agricultural products. The domestic textile industry processes about 20 percent of domestically grown cotton. The construction industry has suffered from low investment in capital projects and from shoddy workmanship that has discouraged international contracts.

**Energy:** All phases of energy production are controlled by state-run companies or government agencies. In 2003 Tajikistan met about 50 percent of its domestic power needs. About 90 percent of electricity generating capacity is hydroelectric, but completion of new dams has suffered long delays, and only an estimated 10 percent of Tajikistan's potential hydroelectric capacity (most based on the Vakhsh River) is in use. Low rainfall causes electric power shortages. The largest operating hydroelectric station, at Nurek, has a rated capacity of 3,000 MWh. Two separate electric power grids, one in the north and one in the south, are both connected with the Uzbekistan system. Because oil drilling has not recovered since the civil war, Tajikistan imports nearly all of its oil, mainly from Uzbekistan. Some natural gas is extracted in the state of Khatlon, but 95 percent of domestic consumption comes from imports from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Tajikistan's coal reserves are minimal.

**Services:** Between January 2002 and September 2003, the overall output of the services sector increased by 19.5 percent. The banking system includes 16 commercial banks and the central National Bank of Tajikistan, which is the regulatory authority. The state controls the system, although in principle most banks have been privatized. An internationally assisted restructuring program was completed in 2003. Banks provide a narrow range of services, concentrating on moving credit to state-owned enterprises. Only an estimated 10 percent of the capital in Tajikistan moves through the banking system, and small businesses rarely borrow from banks. The tourism industry, which was eliminated by the civil war, has not re-established itself since the war because of poor infrastructure, lack of promotion, and security concerns.

**Labor:** In 2001 Tajikistan's active labor force was estimated at 1.83 million, of whom 64 percent were employed in agriculture, 24 percent in services, and 10 percent in industry and construction. The real wages of most workers declined in the early 2000s. Because of the continued dominance of state farms, the majority of workers are government employees, although only a small number rely completely on wages. Many workers find seasonal employment in Russia and other countries, and their remittances are an important economic resource in Tajikistan. In 2003 the average wage of a public-sector employee was US\$10 per month, substantially below the poverty line. In 2002 the national unemployment rate was estimated at 40 percent, but in rural areas unemployment exceeds 60 percent.

**Foreign Economic Relations:** In the post-Soviet era, Tajikistan has substantially shifted its markets away from the former Soviet republics; by 2002 some 75 percent of total exports went to customers outside the Commonwealth of Independent States. In 2002 the largest markets for aluminum were the Netherlands, Turkey, and Iran. In 2003 the top five overall buyers of Tajikistan's exports, in order of value, were the Netherlands, Turkey, Latvia, Switzerland, Uzbekistan, Russia, and Iran. Besides aluminum, which accounts for more than half of export value, the main export commodities are cotton, electric power, fruits, vegetable oils, and textiles. In 2002 the largest suppliers of Tajikistan's imports, in order of value, were Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Romania. Those import rankings are largely determined by the high value of fuels and electric power that Tajikistan buys from its neighbors. Other significant imports are alumina to supply the aluminum industry and grain and flour. Russia plays a major role as a supplier of alumina on which Tajikistan's aluminum industry depends.



**Trade Balance:** Tajikistan has suffered trade deficits throughout the post-Soviet era. In 2003 exports were worth US\$750 million and imports US\$890 million, creating a trade deficit of US\$140 million. In 2001 the deficit was US\$16 million, based on exports of US\$688 million and imports of US\$704 million. In 2002 the deficit was US\$120 million, based on exports of US\$710 million and imports of US\$830 million.

**Balance of Payments:** In 2003 Tajikistan's overall balance of payments was US\$15 million. The current account deficit, which was US\$66 million in 2003, had shown a general downward trend since the late 1990s after reaching 30 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the early 1990s. In 2003 the current account deficit was overcome by positive balances in public-sector capital, capital transfers, and direct investment.

**External Debt:** In mid-2003, Tajikistan's external debt was estimated at US\$1 billion, most of which was owed by the public sector. This amount grew steadily through the 1990s and early 2000s because of state borrowing policy.

**Foreign Investment:** In the early 2000s, foreign direct investment has remained low because of political and economic instability, corruption, slow privatization, the poor domestic financial system, and Tajikistan's geographic isolation. The establishment of businesses nearly always requires bribing officials. In 2003 foreign direct investment totaled US\$41 million, a slight increase over the 2002 total of US\$36 million.

**Currency and Exchange Rate:** The somoni was introduced in 2000 to replace the Tajikistan ruble, which had been the currency since 1991. Since 2001 the exchange rate has remained relatively stable. In 2004 some 3.03 somoni equaled one U.S. dollar.

**Fiscal Year:** Tajikistan's fiscal year is the calendar year.

## TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

**Overview:** Most of Tajikistan's transportation system was built during the Soviet era, and since that time the system has deteriorated badly because of insufficient investment and maintenance. Neither the Soviet system nor subsequently built infrastructure addresses the topographical division between the northern and southern regions of the country, which remain essentially unconnected by modern modes of ground transportation. Air transport is considered unreliable.

**Roads:** Tajikistan has an estimated 30,000 kilometers of roads, nearly all of which were built before 1991. One main artery runs between the northwestern city of Khujand and Dushanbe. A second main artery runs east from Dushanbe to Khorog in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province, then northeast across the mountains to the Kyrgyz city of Osh. Because the former route is closed in winter, a tunnel is being built to bypass the mountain crossing and open a route connecting Tashkent (Uzbekistan) and points north with Afghanistan and Pakistan to the south, via Tajikistan.

**Railroads:** The railroad system totals only 480 kilometers of track, all of it broad gauge. The system connects the main urban centers of western Tajikistan with points in neighboring Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In 2000 a new line connected the southern cities of Qurghonteppa and Kulob. Passenger transit through Tajikistan has been hindered by periodic failures by Tajik Railways to pay transit tariffs and by safety issues.

**Ports:** Tajikistan has no access to the sea.

**Inland Waterways:** Tajikistan has no navigable inland waterways.

**Civil Aviation/Airports:** In 2003 Tajikistan had 15 airports, of which two had runways longer than 3,000 meters. The largest airport, at Dushanbe, has flights to only a few international points. Few flights connect Dushanbe with Tashkent, which is the nearest airport offering connections to major European destinations. State-run Tajikistan Airlines, whose safety record has been questionable, offers flights to other Central Asian countries excepting Uzbekistan and weekly flights to Germany.

**Pipelines:** Tajikistan's 540 kilometers of gas pipeline bring natural gas from Uzbekistan to Dushanbe and transport gas between points in Uzbekistan across northwestern Tajikistan. There are 38 kilometers of oil pipeline.

**Telecommunications:** The conventional telephone system is in poor condition because it has received little investment in the post-Soviet era. In 2003 some 242,000 main lines were in use, a ratio of only one per 289 people. Many towns are not connected to the national network. In the early 2000s, the state telecommunications agency, Tajiktelekom, has received some international aid to upgrade the telephone system. In 2003 an estimated 47,300 mobile telephones were in use, served by several cellular networks. Internet use has grown slowly; in 2003 some 12 servers were serving an estimated 4,100 users in urban centers.

## GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

**Overview:** Tajikistan is a republic with three branches of government dominated by the executive branch. The current constitution was adopted in 1994 and amended significantly in 1999 and 2003. Political stability has improved since the civil war ended in 1997, but in order to gain control of certain areas the central government has compromised and forged alliances among regional factions and clans, which retain substantial political influence. Particularly important is the rivalry between politicians of the northern regions and those of the south. The 1997 peace accord guaranteed 30 percent of government positions to members of the United Tajik Opposition (UPO), tempering the dominance of "southern" over "northern" politicians in the governments of President Imomali Rakhmonov.

**Executive Branch:** The president is the dominant figure in the government. He sits as head of the government, called the Council of Ministers, and as chairman of the parliament (the Supreme Assembly, Majlisi Oli). The president also appoints the prime minister and all members of the government (the Council of Ministers), with parliamentary approval. The council, which

executes the decisions of the president, includes 20 ministers, five committee heads, and several ex officio members. The president is directly elected to a seven-year term. In 2003 a national referendum eliminated the constitutional two-term limitation on the current president, Imomali Rakhmonov, meaning that he could stand for re-election in 2006 and again in 2013. Rakhmonov also has accumulated substantial informal power through patronage.

**Legislative Branch:** The bicameral Supreme Assembly (Majlisi Oli) includes the 63-seat Assembly of Representatives, which meets year-round, and the 33-seat National Assembly, which meets at least twice per year. Until 2000 Tajikistan had a unicameral legislature. The members of the Supreme Assembly are chosen by direct popular election to serve five-year terms. Of the 63 members of the Supreme Assembly, 22 are elected by party, in proportion to the number of votes received by each party, and the remaining members are elected from single-member constituencies. Three-fourths of the National Assembly members are chosen by local council meetings of the four subnational jurisdictions, each of which gets equal representation. The remaining members are appointed directly by the president. The pro-government People's Democratic Party controls both houses after the elections of 2000. Opposition factions in the Supreme Assembly have clashed with pro-government members over some issues. The next elections for both houses are scheduled for 2005.

**Judicial Branch:** The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. The Supreme Court is the highest court. Other high courts include the Supreme Economic Court and the Constitutional Court, which decides questions of constitutionality. The president appoints the judges of these three courts, with the approval of the legislature. There is also a Military Court. The judges of all courts are appointed to ten-year terms.

**Administrative Divisions:** Tajikistan is divided into three main regions: Soghd (formerly Leninobod), including all of the northwestern part of the country; Khatlon, including all of the southwest, and the autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan, which covers the entire sparsely populated eastern half of the country. Dushanbe, the capital, is administered separately.

**Provisional and Local Government:** The executive heads of the regions are appointed by the president. Provincial councils are chosen by direct election. Each region is divided into districts (totaling 13) and towns. Districts are directly subordinate to the central government. Heads of district and town governments are appointed by the president with the approval of district and town councils, which are elected by popular vote.

**Judicial and Legal System:** The constitution calls for an independent judiciary, but the executive branch and criminal groups have considerable influence on judicial functions. Bribery of judges is commonplace. The court system has local, district, regional, and national levels, with each higher court serving as an appellate court for the level below. Appeals of court decisions are rare because the populace generally does not trust the judicial system. Constitutional guarantees to the right to an attorney and to a prompt and public trial often are ignored. The Soviet-era presumption of the guilt of the defendant remains in force. The procurator's office conducts all criminal investigations.

**Electoral System:** Suffrage is universal for citizens 18 years of age and older. The Rakhmonov regime has gained substantial influence over the registration of parties, the holding of referenda, and election procedures. In 1999 and 2003, referenda of dubious fairness made constitutional changes that strengthened Rakhmonov's hold on power. International observers also found substantial irregularities in the conduct of the 1999 presidential election, in which only one opposition candidate was permitted to register and the media were censored. Six parties participated in the 2000 parliamentary elections, although observers reported state interference in the process and with opposition candidates' access to the media. No electoral reform has occurred since the elections of 2000.

**Political Parties:** In the early 2000s, the governing People's Democratic Party (PDP) has gained strength as many opposition party leaders have joined the government and others have been disqualified from participation in elections. The Communist Party of Tajikistan, a nominal opposition party that has supported President Rakhmonov on most issues, has lost support since 2000. The liberal, pro-market Democratic Party also has lost support. In 2003 the Islamic Renaissance Party lost its chief opposition issue with elimination of the ban on religious parties, although parties may not receive aid from religious institutions, and tension has remained between the government and Islamic factions. Akbar Turajonzoda, leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UPO), became a Rakhmonov supporter after being named deputy prime minister in 1997. Some antigovernment sentiment has been channeled into radical Islamic organizations such as Hizb ut-Tahrir rather than into conventional political parties. In 2004 at least four parties, including one faction of the Democratic Party, were banned, and a total of six parties and five organizations called movements were registered.

**Mass Media:** For most of the population, radio and television are the most important source of information. During the civil war (1992–97), the Rakhmonov government severely repressed both broadcast and print media; since that time, neither has recovered independent operations. In 2003 one government television station and several independent stations were in operation, but all stations depended on government transmission equipment. Although the law requires registration of independent broadcast outlets, some unlicensed stations have operated. Russian channels are received by satellite, and most regions receive the national television channel. In the post-Soviet era, newspaper circulation has decreased sharply because of the high expense of materials and the poverty of the population. About three-quarters of newspapers at the national, regional, and local levels are government-owned, but some independent publications exist and some political organizations have their own publications. In mid-2004, government closure of an independent publishing house was seen as an election-related extension of media repression. In 2003 four Tajik news agencies and one Russian news agency (RIA Novosti) were operating.

**Foreign Relations:** Because of its isolated location, Tajikistan continues to rely chiefly on economic, military, and political support from Russia. In turn, Russia has used Tajikistan as a foothold in Central Asia. With Russia's approval, Tajikistan offered the United States use of air bases in the anti-Taliban campaign in Afghanistan in 2001–02, and in the early 2000s Tajikistan has sought closer economic ties with the United States. In the early 2000s, U.S. military and humanitarian aid increased significantly. In the post-Soviet era, Tajikistan's cultural and economic relations with Iran have improved; Iran was a key facilitator of the 1997 accord ending Tajikistan's civil war. In the early 2000s, Iran, the traditional rival of Russia for influence in

Tajikistan, has funded major projects such as the completion of the Sangtuda hydroelectric power plant. Following the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2002, Tajikistan's relations with that country have improved substantially. Relations with neighboring Uzbekistan, however, remain problematic. Key issues include the ostensible presence of terrorist groups in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan's mining of the common border, and disputed allocation of Tajikistan's water resources. Tajikistan's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (with China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Uzbekistan) has not provided the expected improvement of commercial or security conditions.

**Membership in International Organizations:** Tajikistan is a member of the following international organizations: the Asian Development Bank, Commonwealth of Independent States, Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Economic Cooperation Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, International Development Association, International Finance Corporation, International Fund for Agricultural Development, International Labour Organization, International Monetary Fund, International Organization for Migration, International Telecommunication Union, Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Partnership for Peace (of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO), Shanghai Cooperation Organization, United Nations, United Nations Committee on Trade and Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Universal Postal Union, World Customs Organization, World Federation of Trade Unions, World Health Organization, and World Trade Organization (observer status).

**Major International Treaties:** Among the multilateral treaties to which Tajikistan is a signatory are the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution, Convention on Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, Geneva Conventions (1949), Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

## NATIONAL SECURITY

**Armed Forces Overview:** Tajikistan's army has benefited from the inclusion of substantial experienced units of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) forces that fought the government in the civil war. However, the army, which has about 6,000 troops, is poorly funded and maintained. The air force has about 800 troops, and the border guard has about 1,200. Borders are defended mainly by Russian border guard units.

**Foreign Military Relations:** Tajikistan is heavily dependent for border control on 12,000 troops of the Russian Federal Border Guard (which includes Tajik enlisted personnel) and for national defense on the forces of the Russian 201<sup>st</sup> Motorized Rifle Division. In recent years, the long-term presence of that division, which has been in Tajikistan throughout the post-Soviet era and

played a major role in the civil war, has been ratified in bilateral defense treaties. In 2004 a total of 22,000 to 25,000 Russian troops were in Tajikistan. The majority of the Russian troops in Tajikistan are stationed near Dushanbe, Qurghonteppa, and Kulob. A large number of Russian military advisers also work at the Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan. In 2002 Tajikistan offered assistance to the U.S. campaign against the Taliban in neighboring Afghanistan; a small number of U.S. troops were stationed in Tajikistan for a short time.

**External Threat:** Although Tajikistan is not threatened by conventional armed attack, its porous borders leave it vulnerable to an ongoing erosion of domestic law and order by illicit trafficking activity and to the presence of Islamic terrorist insurgents.

**Defense Budget:** In the early 2000s, Tajikistan has increased its defense budget significantly, although from a very low starting point. In 2001 the budget was US\$12.7 million, in 2002 it was US\$14.8 million, and in 2003 it was US\$16.2 million.

**Major Military Units:** The Tajikistani army has two motorized rifle divisions, one mountain brigade, one artillery brigade, one special forces brigade, one special forces detachment, and one surface-to-air missile regiment. The unit structure of the air force is unknown.

**Major Military Equipment:** The army has 40 main battle tanks, 34 armored infantry fighting vehicles, 29 armored personnel carriers, 12 pieces of towed artillery, 10 multiple rocket launchers, 9 mortars, and 20 surface-to-air missiles. The air force has four or five combat helicopters.

**Military Service:** Males are eligible for conscription at age 18. The standard tour of active duty is 24 months. Because bribery of conscription officials is common, a disproportionate number of poor individuals are forced into military service.

**Paramilitary Forces:** Tajikistan's border guard force has 1,200 active-duty personnel.

**Military Forces Abroad:** No Tajikistani forces are stationed outside Tajikistan.

**Foreign Military Forces:** Some 22,000 to 25,000 Russian troops are stationed in Tajikistan. (Some Russian border guard units include Tajik enlisted personnel serving under Russian officers.)

**Police:** Corruption and brutality are widespread in Tajikistan's police forces, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior. Police have been implicated in many instances of human rights violations and involvement with criminal groups. The number of personnel in the police forces is not known.

**Internal Threat:** Because of widespread poverty and high unemployment and the central government's lack of control of some areas and national borders, Tajikistan is vulnerable to turmoil spreading from neighboring Afghanistan. Some remnants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are known to be in Tajikistan. Sharply increased narcotics trafficking through Tajikistan has increased related criminal activity and narcotics addiction along the trafficking

routes. In 2001 a series of assassinations (never solved) targeted government officials and the leaders of religious minorities. Corruption is pervasive in most of Tajikistan's institutions and is exacerbated by severe poverty. In 2004 the head of the national narcotics control agency was arrested on several criminal charges, which may have been political in origin.

**Terrorism:** Large numbers of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are known to have maintained bases in Tajikistan between 1999 and 2001, and in 1999 terrorists took hostages in Kyrgyzstan after crossing the border from Tajikistan. Although the IMU was decimated in the Afghan war of 2001–02, some IMU forces are believed to remain in Tajikistan. Hizb ut-Tahrir, a nominally nonviolent Islamic extremist organization with a substantial base in Tajikistan, is believed to be potentially a terrorist organization. In 2004 Tajikistan began joint antiterrorist exercises with Kyrgyzstan along the common border over which terrorist groups have penetrated in the early 2000s.

**Human Rights:** The approach of the 2005 parliamentary elections brought increased closures of independent and opposition newspapers and attacks on journalists. No professional organizations represent the rights of journalists, and few court cases have involved journalists' rights. In 2003 the government blocked access to the only Internet website run by the political opposition. Constitutional guarantees of a fair trial are not always observed, and torture often is used against individuals accused of crimes. Prisons are overcrowded, and the incidence of tuberculosis and malnutrition is high among inmates.